

## Fall 2001/Winter 2002 • Volume 1, Issue 2

Terry Muscato



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Produced by Network 2 Marketing/  
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Printed by students in the Pre-Vocational  
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The VAVS newsletter has been created for all volunteers and potential volunteers of VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York. This publication is meant to showcase the wonderful work all of our volunteers contribute to VA. Please do not hesitate to contact anyone on the Advisory or Editorial Boards with your comments, corrections or suggestions.



**Visit Our Network Web Site**

<http://www.va.gov/visns/visn02/>

## Planetree Comes to Upstate New York

Neal K. Relyea, RN

*Network 2 Planetree Program Coordinator*

Many years ago, the founder of modern medicine, Hippocrates, sat beneath a planetree (now known as a sycamore tree) and taught students that patients should be the focus of health care. He believed that the environment around patients was an important factor in their healing.

That concept, so central to nursing, medicine, social work, and other caregiving professions, inspired Angelica Thieriot to create Planetree in 1978. After several traumatic hospital experiences, she developed the Planetree philosophy. In 1985, the first Planetree unit opened in San Francisco, California. Today, there



*Canandaigua's dementia care unit has created a "garden room" for patients. It's complete with a glider and plants that bring the outdoors inside.*

(see Planetree page 3)

## Veteran Stand Downs

Homelessness is a serious problem in our country. People are seen living on the streets throughout our community. Many of the homeless are veterans. And many more veterans run the risk of becoming homeless.

They deserve better and they need our help. Network 2 is committed to making a difference in these veteran's lives. Many veterans are simply unaware of the services that are available to them. That is why we hold "Stand Downs" throughout the Network. At most Stand Downs, homeless veterans have access to VA health care professionals and other community service organizations that provide them with information and services such as: medical and dental screenings, food, clothing, personal

care items, blankets, flu shots, benefits counseling, haircuts, VA enrollment and photo ID cards, housing assistance, legal services, social services, employment assistance and much more.

Stand Down is a military term used when front line troops come in out of the field to regroup, re-supply and refresh. The concept of a stand down began in 1988 in San Diego when a group of Vietnam Veterans believed that the highly effective military model of a stand down could be used to provide a safe and supportive environment for homeless veterans. Stand Downs help draw the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless to places where they are welcomed by people committed to helping them.

(see Stand Down page 8)





## Planetree (continued from page 2)

are more than 40 health care facilities throughout the world that practice Planetree's philosophy of patient-focused care. This way of thinking seeks to care for the patient - healing the body, mind and soul.

The VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York System has embraced this philosophy. In Canandaigua, the Planetree committee has already expanded to 25 members, each of whom are committed to making the VA health care environment healthier and happier for our veterans, their families and our VA staff.

A group of veterans who embrace the Planetree philosophy have donated \$5,600. This money will be used for gardens that the patients and their families can enjoy, as well as improving the environment in the patient care areas, and adding more entertainment for our patients. Other projects are also in the works.

For more information about Planetree and its integration into Network 2, visit our website at [www.va.gov/visns/visn02/cslines/planetree.html](http://www.va.gov/visns/visn02/cslines/planetree.html) or Planetree's national website at [www.planetree.org](http://www.planetree.org).

Social workers across the Network would like all WWII veterans to know it's not too late to earn their high school diploma. Social workers within our Network can assist or the veteran can:

- Contact the high school he/she would have graduated from
- Supply service papers
- The rest of the process is handled by the school.

We will be holding a graduation ceremony for the veterans in the near future.

## Syracuse Volunteer Staff Help Honor WWII Minority Veterans

The Syracuse VA Medical Center held a "Day of Honor" at the OnCenter in July. Attended by over 600 people, this event honored 88 living World War II minority veterans. Speakers included **Congressman James T. Walsh** and **Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Anthony J. Principi**.

The Day of Honor is a nationwide, progressive, city-by-city observance to honor the service of African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino Americans from WW II. On May 23, 2000 the US Senate and the US House of Representatives unanimously passed a Joint Resolution establishing the Day of Honor. This is the first time that Congress has passed such a resolution.

In the words of Tom Brokaw from his book *The Greatest Generation*: "The World War II years will forever be testimony to America's collective and individual resistance to tyranny, its awesome and ingenious industrial machinery, and what may be its greatest strength, the common values of its richly varied population when faced with a common threat. Any celebration of America's strengths and qualities during those years of courage and sacrifice, however, will be tempered by the stains of racism that were pervasive in practice and in policy."



WWII minority veteran, Rodolfo Reyes receives a boutonniere from former Marine Corp. Corporal Jake Nowakowski before the recognition event.

Syracuse voluntary service was proud to be a part of this historic event - honoring a group of veterans who had all but been forgotten. We are proud of the accomplishments of all of our veterans.







## News from...

### Albany

- ❖ The Stratton VA Medical Center will commemorate the 57th Anniversary of the Battle for Iwo-Jima on February 22. A re-enactment of the flag raising by the Marine Corps League will take place at 9:00 a.m. in the front circle. A ceremony will also be held. Six thousand, eight hundred and twenty one soldiers lost their lives at Iwo-Jima, where the first US flag was raised on Japanese soil during WWII. It remains an enduring image of our country's military courage and spirit. Many area veterans who were present on the island at that historic moment will attend the ceremony. Immediately following the ceremony, a breakfast will be held in the auditorium. All volunteers are encouraged to attend.



- ❖ The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival was held October 15 - 22 in Arizona. Forty-one local veterans competed at the Albany VA Medical Center, five of whom were selected to perform and participate at the national event. **Vivian Eagan** and **Helen Fitzgerald** are tap dancers that entertained hospitalized veterans. **William Fay III, Bud Abare** and **Walter Boes** combined their song writing, musical and singing talents to form a trio called "Fox Hole." Through music therapy, these three veterans have been able to cope with the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Their song "Don't Let the Devil Win" tells other veterans suffering from PTSD not to let memories destroy their lives. We thank all who donated funds to GPF 1329. Through these contributions, we were able to send these veterans to represent our medical center and showcase their talents.

### Bath

#### Fundraiser Held for Golden Age Games

For the third year, Phil Dirt and Dozers appeared at the County Fairgrounds to help raise money for the Golden Age Games. Sponsored by the Charles E. Wescott American Legion Post #173 and the VA Voluntary Service Organizations, the group dazzled the crowd with their musical talent, high energy and contagious sense of humor. Attendees were taken to another time and place with music from the 50s, 60s and 70s.

The event raised more than \$6,000 for next year's games.



From left to right: Vern Woolston, Frank "Pepsi" Szydlowski, (standing) George "Butch" Lyon, Amalia Pellon and Victor Wormley before enjoying the show.





## Canandaigua

- ❖ **Holiday Luncheons:** Please consider sponsoring a holiday meal for the Rochester Outpatient Clinic and/or Canandaigua Day Treatment Centers. The staff will do the shopping, cooking and clean-up. It's easy - just contact Voluntary Service and we'll arrange everything. This is often the only holiday meal and celebration that some of our patients get.
- ❖ **Holiday Purchasing Fund:** We will be purchasing items for our patients for the holiday program. Our funds, however, continue to be depleted. We purchase items for approximately 225 of our inpatients and 500 of our outpatients. If your organization would like to donate to this fund, please contact Voluntary Service at (716) 393-7761 or mail your donation to us. Your monetary donations are appreciated!
- ❖ **Mitten Tree:** The holiday season would not be complete without our mitten tree! Each year, our tree in Voluntary Service is decorated with colorful mittens and scarves to be distributed to the homeless. Last year, one of our volunteers delivered over 70 pair of beautiful handmade mittens. If you would like to donate items, drop them off in the Volunteer Lounge.
- ❖ **Santa Hats:** Do you have your Santa hat from last year? If so, please remember to bring it with you when we celebrate the holidays at the VA!
- ❖ **Cookies for the Holidays:** Homemade cookies are needed for the wards during the Gift Distribution Program. Your goodies are always a treat for the patients. If you would like to donate cookies, please deliver them to the auditorium by 12:30 p.m. on December 23, 2001.

Thank you for the pleasure of your friendship, your generosity, and your goodwill during the past year. We wish you and your families a wonderful holiday season and a New Year filled with happiness and prosperity

Robin and Patti

## Western New York Healthcare System (Batavia and Buffalo)

### Student Buddy Program

High school students are expected to perform community service each school year. In response to this, Batavia's Geriatrics and Extended Care Line and voluntary service department developed a new volunteer program. High school students are placed on various nursing home care units (NHCU), where they were matched with a staff member.

The program, designed to enhance the variety of activities available for our NHCU patients can include anything from: outside walks, board or card games, reading newspapers, ice cream socials, coupon cutting, sing-alongs, and a variety of other activities that promote stimulation and socialization. A staff member is assigned as "activity person" for the day and partnered with a student to work with patients on the day's activities.

The initial program had 13 students who volunteered approximately 240 hours. We anticipate that this program will continue to grow with each school year.

### Medical Explorer Post Gears Up

Medical Explorer Post #838 at the Buffalo VA Medical Center begins its second year assisting high school students with the exploration of health care careers. In a joint venture with the Niagara Frontier Boy Scouts of America. Post #838 had seven students from five area high schools participate in 2000. VA staff members served as Explorer Advisors. Monthly meetings were held to give the students a general overview of the medical center and various areas of health care. Students also volunteered 200 hours in areas such as the emergency room, fiscal office, nutrition and food service, and patient wards.

Any student (ages 14 - 20) who would like to learn more about jobs in the health care field are welcome to join our program. Call (716) 862-3269 for more information.





## Wish Lists

### Albany

The Albany VA Medical Center is looking for monetary donations for the following causes:

- ❖ Fund 1312 - to purchase personal comfort items and clothing articles for indigent patients
- ❖ Fund 1337 - donations earmarked to purchase a portable ultrasound for Occupational Therapy. \$1,595 is needed
- ❖ Fund 1328 - to support sending veterans to the Winter Sports Clinic, Golden Age Games and Wheelchair Games.

### Bath

- ❖ Fish tank and tropical fish
- ❖ Non-perishable food items
- ❖ New bedding and towels
- ❖ Utensils, silverware
- ❖ Pots and pans
- ❖ Small appliances (electric can openers, toasters, irons, etc.)
- ❖ Sponsors for off-site events and entertainment for patients
- ❖ Like new or new clothing (jeans, shirts, footwear, coats, and jackets)
- ❖ Lap robes

Funds are needed for:

- ❖ Veteran transportation
- ❖ Televisions for patient rooms and common areas
- ❖ Holiday events and programs
- ❖ National Games
- ❖ Women Veterans Program

**Monetary donations to the General Post Fund are always accepted. Contact Voluntary Service for more information.**

### Canandaigua and Rochester

- ❖ Personal care items (shampoo, shaving cream, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, lotion, new socks and underwear, etc.)
- ❖ Tickets to sporting events or for bowling
- ❖ Bingo prizes
- ❖ Donations for the DAV/volunteer transportation program
- ❖ Organization sponsored luncheons/ pizza parties
- ❖ Donations for the Planetree program
- ❖ Pool table
- ❖ Chime clocks
- ❖ Videotapes (old movies)
- ❖ Rototiller
- ❖ 50-gallon aquarium
- ❖ Organization sponsored day trips
- ❖ Refrigerator, stove, washer and dryer (for golf house).



### Syracuse

- ❖ Patient bedside telephones - \$15.00
- ❖ 25" room television - \$289.00
- ❖ TV/VCR with cart (patient education) - \$500.00
- ❖ Satellite TV programming \$5,000.00

We are always looking for comfort items (t-shirts, underwear, socks) and items for recreational therapy (paint supplies, etc.).

**Volunteers are needed for: companion therapy, clerical assistance, assisting with recreational activities, patient escort/transport, golf course and clothing room.**

### VA Western New York Healthcare System

- ❖ Door wander guards - Batavia
- ❖ Funding for PTSD Residential Rehabilitation Program - Batavia
- ❖ Nourishment for Diabetes Support Group - Batavia
- ❖ Newspaper subscriptions - Buffalo
- ❖ Social Work Emergency Travel - Buffalo
- ❖ Treadmills - Buffalo
- ❖ Coffee Cart Program - Both sites
- ❖ Fish Tank Maintenance (volunteers) - Both sites
- ❖ National Veterans Games (volunteers) - Both sites

**Please contact Voluntary Service prior to purchasing items or bringing in any large items for donation.**





## Special Events for November & December 2001 and January 2002

### Albany

November 10 7:00 - 11:00 p.m.  
**USO Dance and Fundraising Gala**  
Armory Center, Central Avenue  
*Sponsored by VetCare*  
A nostalgic recreation of a 1942 USO Dance Canteen with college swing dance competition finals, the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra, celebrity guests and the USO Show of Metropolitan New York.

December 4 - 7  
**American Legion Auxiliary Gift Shop Tag Days**  
Albany VA Medical Center

December 15  
**Gift Distribution**  
Albany VA Medical Center (inpatient and outpatient)

### Bath

November 10 2:00 p.m.  
**Veterans Appreciation Weekend Kick-Off/  
Marine Corps Birthday Celebration**

November 11, **Veterans Day**  
8:00 a.m. Muffin and juice distribution on hospital wards  
1:00 p.m. Veterans Day Salute - Elk's Carnival

November 12 5:00 p.m.  
**Veterans Appreciation Dinner**  
VFW & Auxiliary Post 524

November 30 - December 4  
**American Legion Auxiliary Gift Shop**

December 10 - 14  
**VAVS Gift Wrapping**

December 21  
**Santa Gift Distribution**

January 7 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
**Southern Tier All-Star Jazz Band**

January 21 1:00 p.m.  
**Dr. Martin Luther King observance**  
Union Chapel

### Canandaigua

November 8 1:30 p.m.  
**Female Veterans Day Tea**  
Bldg. 1, Director's Conference Room -  
*Sponsored by the American Legion Auxiliary*

November 9 2:00 p.m.\*  
**Re-Creation Show**  
Bldg. 5, Auditorium

November 12 2:00 p.m.  
**Pablo's Concert for Veterans**  
Bldg. 5, Auditorium

November 14 9:00 a.m.  
**American Legion Auxiliary Gift Shop**  
Rochester Outpatient Clinic

November 15 2:00 p.m.\*  
**New Horizon Band Concert**  
Bldg. 5, Auditorium

November 18-20  
**American Legion Auxiliary Gift Shop**  
Bldg. 5, Auditorium

December 9 2:00 p.m.  
**BPO Elks Lap Robe Distribution**  
Bldg. 7, Volunteer Lounge

December 11 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
**VAVS Gift Wrap**  
Bldg. 5, Auditorium

December 23 12:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
**VAVS Holiday Gift Distribution**  
Bldg. 5, Auditorium

*\*Volunteers need to report one hour earlier to assist in escorting veterans to the event.*

### Syracuse

November 9  
**Native American Day**  
9:00 a.m. Local crafts by area Native American crafters  
11:00 a.m. Native American issue awareness program

November 15 2:00 p.m.  
**Re-creation**

*Sponsored by the Elks Lodge*

November 19 6:30 p.m.  
**Liverpool Community Band,**  
Syracuse VA Medical Center  
Musicians to entertain veterans

December 3 - 4  
**American Legion Auxiliary Gift Shop**

### VA Western New York Healthcare System

November 11  
**Veterans Day Memorial Service**  
10:30 a.m. Batavia VA Medical Center, Flag Pole area  
2:00 p.m. Buffalo VA Medical Center, Room 301

November 22 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
**Thanksgiving Day Dinner for Veterans**  
Buffalo VA Medical Center, Food Court/  
Canteen Area

December 3 9:00 a.m.  
**Wreath Making Project and Distribution**  
*Sponsored by the Amherst Garden Club*  
Buffalo VA Medical Center, Room 301

December 9 2:00 p.m.  
**St. Joe's Alumni Corps. Brass Ensemble,  
Annual Holiday Season Performance**  
Batavia VA Medical Center, Recreation Building 4

December 12 9:00 a.m.  
**Wreath Distribution**  
*Sponsored by the Order of the Eastern Star*  
Batavia VA Medical Center, Recreation Building 4

December 25  
**Christmas Day Gift Distribution**  
Buffalo and Batavia

January 18 11:30 a.m.  
**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Observance**  
Buffalo VA Medical Center, Room 301

<http://vaww.visn2.med.va.gov/calendar.html>







## Voluntary Service Holds Educational Conference

Network 2 hosted the third Annual Representative and Deputy Volunteer Conference in June, at the beautiful Athenaeum Hotel, on the grounds of Chautauqua Institute, Chautauqua, New York. This gorgeous setting served as the backdrop for the well-attended three-day conference.

Originally established to help rally volunteer support for the 1999 National Golden Age Games in Geneva, New York, this conference was informative and enjoyed by the 155 representatives from across the state. Opening ceremonies included formalities traditional of many VA special events. Welcome addresses from Chautauqua Institute's, **Michael Sullivan** and Network 2 Director, **Fred Malphurs** set the tone of the event.



Presenters spent the first full day sharing innovative ideas and helpful ways to impact our veterans and staff in a positive manner. Volunteer representatives attended workshops that introduced them to Planetree, Internet access, and other volunteer related topics.

Hats off to the staff at the Athenaeum Hotel for playing host to an outstanding Network 2 conference! Look for information regarding our 2002 Conference in the next issue of this newsletter.

## Stand Down (continued from page 2)

The Stand Downs have renewed the spirit and given many veterans the information and counseling needed to greatly improve their situations. This special program would not be as effective as it is without the support and tireless energy of our dedicated VA volunteers and staff. Volunteers serve as van drivers, squad leader assistants, registration desk workers, childcare room helpers, lunchroom assistants and end-of-day cleanup.

Find out how you can get involved with an upcoming Stand Down in your community. Contact your local VA Medical Center's Voluntary Service office for more information. If you are unable to volunteer, donations are always needed for Stand Downs. Contributions are tax deductible and help the veterans who were there for us when our country needed them.



VA Healthcare Network  
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